

MINUTES
STATEWIDE RAC MEETING
October 16-17, 2003
Sunset Station
Henderson, Nevada

Thursday, October 16

List of RAC Attendees

Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin RAC Members

Jim Eidel
Larie Trippet
D. Craig Young
John E. Dicks
Jerry Hepworth
John Falen
Ernie Paine
Bill Roullier
Tina Nappe
Sherman Swanson
John Gebhardt
John Mudge
Susie Askew

Mojave-Southern Great Basin RAC Members

Billie Young
Claire R. Toomey
John Weisser
Jerry Helton
Bob Maichle
Marta Agee
Steve Mellington
John Hiatt
Steve Parker
Colleen Beck
Thaila Dondero
Mark Hill
Kenny Anderson

Northeastern Great Basin RAC Members

Dave Gaskin
Hank Vogler
Jeff White
Brent Howerton
Kathy Ataman
Dave Tattam
Patsy Tomera

John Ellison

Bureau of Land Management

Bob Abbey	Nevada State Director
Jo Simpson	Chief, Office of Communications, Nevada State Office
Del Fortner	DSD, Minerals Management, Nevada State Office
Meg Jensen	DSD, Natural Resources, Lands and Planning, Nevada State Office
Butch Hayes	Fire Resource Specialist, Nevada State Office
Terry Reed	Winnemucca Field Manager
Helen Hankins	Elko Field Manager
Mark Morse	Las Vegas Field Manager
Gene Kolkman	Ely Field Manager
Jerry Smith	Battle Mountain Field Manager
John Singlaub	Carson City Field Manager
Angie Lara	Associate Field Manager, Las Vegas Field Office
Mark Struble	Public Affairs Specialist, Carson City Field Office
Mike Brown	Public Affairs Specialist, Elko Field Office
Chris Hanefeld	Public Affairs Officer, Ely Field Office
Diane Hendry	Public Affairs Specialist, Battle Mountain and Winnemucca field offices
Phil Guerrero	Public Affairs Officer, Las Vegas Field Office
Kirsten Cannon	Public Affairs Specialist, Las Vegas Field Office
Debra Kolkman	Writer/Editor, Nevada State Office
Nancy Thompson	Field Manager's Secretary, Winnemucca Field Office
Robert Boyd	Hydrologist, Las Vegas Field Office

U.S. Forest Service

June McMillen	U.S. Forest Service, Public Affairs Officer
Jose Noriega	U.S. Forest Service, District Ranger, Santa Rosa Ranger District
Pat Irwin	U.S. Forest Service, District Ranger, Ely Ranger District
Steve Holdsambeck	U.S. Forest Service, District Ranger, Spring Mountain National Recreation Area
Skip Canfield	State of Nevada, Division of State Lands
Bob Vaught	U.S. Forest Service, Forest Supervisor, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Ed Monnig	U.S. Forest Service, Deputy Forest Supervisor, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest

Other Attendees

Dan Peterson	Friends of Sand Mountain/California Off-Road Vehicle Association (CORVA)
Kai Anderson	Chief of Staff, United States Senator Reid's office

A copy of each attachment is listed in the text of, or at the end of these minutes and is on file with the official copy of the minutes in the Nevada State Office of the BLM. Persons desiring to view attachments should contact Debra Kolkman at (775) 289-1946.

Welcome and Introductions - Bob Abbey, BLM Nevada State Director, called the meeting to order at 8:20 am. Abbey welcomed all attending RAC members and provided them with a basic orientation to their role.

- Serve in a significant position to influence decisions made to 48 million acres of public lands in Nevada.
- Help us develop planning decisions for three NCAs and 20 Wilderness Areas.
- Advise BLM on recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior on how to spend \$300 million per year in Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA).
- Provide advice and council in managing over 20,000 wild horses on public land in Nevada - over one half of the wild horses in the U. S.
- Influence the largest rehabilitation effort of any in the U. S., the Great Basin Restoration Initiative.
- Input into decisions on mineral resources - the largest number of geothermal leases of any Western state are here on public lands in Nevada.
- Help us with decisions on implementation of the National Fire Plan.
- Help us with increasing pressures on recreation use on public lands in rural Nevada.
- Help us with recreation related issues: partnerships, public health and safety, involvement with gateway communities, environmental education and outreach, some of the competitions for OHV events.

The role played by RAC members is important and it comes at a price of personal sacrifice to come to these meetings. RACs have a great deal of influence in the planning of the management of our public lands. We look forward to and appreciate that input.

Abbey asked members, BLM officials, and guests to introduce themselves.

Abbey presented **BLM FY 2004 Priorities**, which he said were very much in line with national priorities.

- Updating our land use plans, many of which are over 20 years old.
- Energy resource development – looking at alternative energy sources including solar, wind and geothermal.
- Fuels reduction and the National Fire Plan – We are working with our partners the U.S. Forest Service and local communities to try to reduce the risks of catastrophic wildfire. The best example is the work that is going on in eastern Nevada under the leadership of Gene Kolkman. We are trying to effect a positive change across the range in Nevada. There have been some gains since the 1999 fire season.
- Range management – wild horses and burros, setting AMLs, the need to demonstrate positive change in the sagebrush ecosystem.
- Implementation of special legislation affecting public lands in Nevada. We are fortunate to have the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act, the Clark County Conservation Act, and the Black Rock Desert-High Canyon Emigrant Trails NCA.

These are the things that we know we are being directed to focus attention on from the Director of BLM and the Secretary of the Interior.

BLM Program Outlook for FY 2004 (See attachment 1.)

Presentation by Meg Jensen, DSD, Natural Resources, Lands and Planning

Jensen said that the top priorities facing BLM in Nevada today are -

- Wild horse program – We think this is one of the highest priorities. BLM has a strategy to reach appropriate management levels by 2005. We've been making steady progress in Nevada. This is a two-part goal: Set AMLs on all of our HMAs. Nevada has 21 HMAs they are trying to set AMLs on. We need to remove 5,800 horses this year to meet AML.
- Great Basin Restoration Initiative – including Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project. Winnemucca has pursued the Wildfire Support Group initiatives in the past year.
- Do some streamlining in managing our rangeland program. Improve processing permits. Meeting with RACs on the Sustaining Working Landscapes concept.
- Two pushes for sage grouse
 - State of Nevada Governor's conservation efforts. There are six local plans being developed throughout the state. The plans will be incorporated soon into a statewide plan.
 - The BLM sage grouse strategy has been developed by our Director as a way to support state planning. This plan is on the BLM website and open for comment until November 1.
- Land disposals
 - Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (Baca Bill) – we are pursuing an active program.
 - Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act – affordable housing policy is being developed. The point is for BLM to sell lands to make affordable housing available for less than fair market value to make these developments available to all.

Abbey commented that a small section of SNPLMA provides for BLM to dispose of property at less than fair market value for affordable housing. We are working with local communities to discover what interest there is in these opportunities. We are in a very fortunate position to help the communities with some of the challenges they have for affordable housing.

- Recreation
 - Travel planning and management – supplemental guidance is available to BLM
 - Area and road/trail designation for Winnemucca, Ely and Carson City Plans
 - Continue to have challenges with Special Recreation Permits
- Land use plans - complete
 - Black Rock-High Rock NCA RMP
 - Nellis Test and Training Range RMP
 - Red Rock NCA General Management Plan
 - Elko Fire Plan RMP Amendment
 - Pine Nut Plan RMP Amendment

- Toquop Energy Project EIS
- Elko Wild Horse Management Amendment
- Land use planning in early stages
 - Sloan Canyon NCA
 - Ely RMP
 - Winnemucca RMP
 - Jumbo Hills Plan and Energy Leasing RMP Amendment
 - Las Vegas Land Disposal Boundary Expansion
 - Planning for energy development

We are very active in the wind energy arena

- Energy Rights-of-Way
 - Programmatic Wind Energy EIS
 - Wind site testing applications – 13 authorized (Anemometers, 35 applications pending - 50 percent of BLM nationwide)
 - Geothermal power plant and facilities applications – 3 power plants authorized, 15 support facilities pending

Questions and Comments

- Eidel asked to what extent wind energy development has been coordinated with the sage grouse efforts? Jensen answered there has been a lot of coordination up to the Washington Office level.
- Swanson asked if the fragmentation is being addressed? Fortner answered that this is being looked at. Swanson continued that it seems there has been a paradigm shift in rangeland management in the last few years. Is that shift, as well as pushing against the threshold taking root and going to become a driving force in other land management planning throughout the State? Jensen answered we have talked a lot about adaptive management. Through adaptive management we can be more responsive to the needs across the State.
- Abbey commented the biggest shift will be a renewed emphasis on monitoring. We need to have a good indication of what is happening on the rangelands.
- Eidel commented there is an opportunity to put a bird transept in place. Abbey responded we will have a meeting to discuss that.
- Abbey commented that any time we talk about using livestock to reduce threats of wildfire people say why not just put up a parking lot. We're talking about using prescriptive grazing, using livestock to help us achieve a well-defined objective. It is much cheaper to use livestock than pesticides or other more expensive measures. This is a pilot program.
- Kolkman commented that in the early spring when cheatgrass is coming in we put livestock out there and then pull them off when the perennials began to come on. There is no better treatment to reduce cheatgrass.

- Reed commented we are looking at a number of allotments to see how to apply many different measures.

Presentation by Del Fortner, DSD Minerals Management

Fortner told the group sponsored by Senator Reid, the Senator did reference Nevada as the Saudi Arabia of wind energy.

- Geothermal Resources Steam Act Proposed Changes
 - 9 power plants
 - 165 megawatts
 - 165,000 households supplied with electricity

We seek partnerships with the counties to process applications in a timely manner. The power plants provide employment for the counties, and provide power to homes and industry.

- Oil and Gas Leasing
 - Continue to hold 4 competitive lease sales annually – We are required to process all our APDs (applications for permit to drill) within 35 days – this is the only known regulation that requires BLM to process within a certain length of time.
 - Reduce the backlog of industry-nominated tracts by updating NEPA documents.

Fortner commented that we don't know if today is the sunrise or sunset of oil and gas leasing in this country. Nevada is the only state where BLM operates in cooperation with the State. Industry has a great interest in oil and gas leasing in Nevada.

- Hardrock Mining
 - Greater emphasis on consistency, communication and cooperation – with Nevada Department of Environmental Protection (NDEP), the industry, environmental groups, and Native Americans
 - Encourage conformance with procedures outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding with NDEP and the U.S. Forest Service
 - coordination meetings
 - joint BLM/NDEP bond release inspections
 - Explore ways to make the permitting process more efficient, prevent duplication with NDEP- NEPA reclamation cost estimation and bonding process
 - Strive to get more experienced at field office level
 - Increase the skill mix to meet demands at field level
 - Improve NEPA, reclamation cost estimation and bonding
 - Continue to ensure protection of the environment

BLM's workload went up 300 percent with the recent small rise in gold prices. There were over 19,000 mining claims filed in 2003.

- Abandoned Mine Lands – these are a challenge for BLM
 - Cleanup of large bankrupt and abandoned mines
 - Backfill abandoned mines with emphasis on those in and near high public use areas

- Inventory and secure abandoned mines in cooperation with Nevada Division of Minerals
- Hazardous sites and landfills
 - Work with State of Nevada and the mining industry to
 - remediate and reclaim large AML sites
 - address the physical safety hazards at smaller AML sites
 - Address landfill and “desert dumping” issues

Questions and Comments

- Nappe asked at what point does BLM coordinate with the Department of Wildlife in mine permitting? Fortner answered field offices work directly the Nevada Division of Wildlife.
- Kolkman commented it initially gets started with the scoping and goes all the way through the process.
- Jensen commented as an addition to the discussion of natural resources and lands planning that the concern about monitoring has reached the Washington Office and some of the funding has come down to the states. Monitoring is a national issue.

Presentation by Butch Hayes, Fire Resource Specialist

Hayes told the group that the 2003 fire season was small.

- 2004 Management Program Outlook
 - The first effort will be revision of all fire management plans. A common template has been developed among all agencies which will incorporate budget strategies
 - The second major thing is that single engine air tankers (SEATS) will continue to replace heavy air tankers. BLM’s experience with SEATS has been very positive. They are much more maneuverable.
 - The Student Conservation Association Fire Education Corps will be based in Reno, Carson City and Winnemucca. This next summer, 2004, will be the third year for this program. This group talks to homeowners suggesting ways they can improve the fire prevention system around their homes.
 - Rural fire assistance funding will decrease from \$811,000 in 2003 to \$546,000 in 2004.
 - Interagency Statewide Community Wildfire Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan will be completed during calendar year 2004. In partnership with Nevada agencies, BLM is assessing and prioritizing risk of wildfire in all parts of Nevada. An independent contractor will assess the communities at risk. BLM is the lead on this type of program in the nation.

Hayes told the group in answer to a question by RAC member Falen that he doesn’t anticipate any reduction in funding for the Wildfire Support Group, as it comes from a different source of funding.

- Continued support of/collaboration with the Nevada Fire Safe Council. Explain what can be done in areas to reduce the possibility of catastrophic wildfire.
- Increased activity/projects associated with the Wildfire Support Group in Winnemucca. We anticipate continued support of the initial interests of this group.
- Initial attack capability should remain at the 2003 level.

Fuels reduction budget levels are anticipated to be level in 2004.

Questions and Comments

- Vogler asked is there any effort to give more local control so that nothing is in the way, and allows wildfire to open up some of the areas? Hayes answered in order to do that we have to comply with a number of very stringent guidelines. The only field office that has that in place is Ely on Mt. Grafton. I think you will see this change over time with the development of more fire use plans.
- Hepworth commented we were blessed with not many fires this year. For monies not spent on the suppression side is there a plan for reallocating those funds? Hayes answered we are allocated down to the smallest office in the state. There is no money allocated to Nevada for wildfire suppression, it is paid for from a national fund. Reed answered that there was a private contractor in Winnemucca and that might have been some of the engines seen gathered at a fire. Falen said that we don't want to let these fires burn everywhere.
- Vogler commented he appreciated Falen's point of view, but he would like to see control at the local level, not Denver or Phoenix or Boise. Hayes answered that it's not national control over what a local field manager is doing, it's allocation of resources. Kolkman commented we're getting more and more of an increase in native fuels communities. We'll see more erratic fire behavior when it burns an area that has already burned. We need to understand more about this. In our communities in eastern Nevada when we are at planning levels 4 or 5. We're in a position where all the national resources are elsewhere and we have no other options. We cannot always predict an outcome.
- Eidel asked why, although he had been impressed with the Student Conservation Association, there isn't a group to involve high school students or reach young people who might be starting some of these fires? Hayes answered we are going to establish a group in other communities. We're going to increase participation in the school system.
- Hayes commented whenever we get into a high fire situation, all the cooperators get together in the State office and discuss where the suppression efforts will be put. He also said that FEMA will be included in the cooperative efforts in wildfire management plans.

Abbey asked Bob Vaught to introduce the U.S. Forest Service people present. Vaught thanked Abbey for having them and said it is a good opportunity for the Forest Service to interact with the programs and interests of the BLM and to interact with the RACs.

Sustaining Working Landscapes – Individual RAC Reports – Decision on Final Nevada Report – Abbey explained that for the past six months each of the RACs had been involved in

this issue to determine what a good course of action is for the BLM, then he turned the discussion over to Meg Jensen.

Jensen explained that about eight months ago Washington contacted the field offices with the Sustaining Working Landscapes concept. The first thing we did was go to Winnemucca for a public meeting where there was great discussion. Then we established a subcommittee from all three RACs. They met to discuss the issues and put together a report sent back to the individual RACs.

- BLM asked each RAC to review four concepts:
 - Reserve Common Allotments – allotments whose current operator cannot utilize the forage that can be made available for those operators who have been burned out or can't use their allotment for other reasons.
 - Volunteer Allotment Restructuring – two allotments next to each other where one is not being used, organized into one larger allotment
 - Rangeland Conservation Partnerships – projects on public lands where the permittee helps with the project and gets some monetary help toward their grazing fees
 - Landscape Habitat Improvement – for BLM improvement of individual rangeland health

Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin RAC – Tina Nappe, Vice Chair (See attachment 2.)

The subcommittee had discussed several other steps, one of which was trying to share each letter with all of the RACs and coming up with an integrated statement. That was not accomplished prior to this meeting. The Sierra Front RAC has not voted on their letter and will not do so until tomorrow. We were the first RAC to say we adamantly did not support the proposals. In our two Districts we felt that the concepts would not work in major parts of the allotments. These proposals did not highlight the Standards and Guidelines. We did discuss that we would prefer to have public input at the beginning of the process and at the end based on monitoring and in between the permittee would have more flexibility. Conservation easements are reintroduced in our letter. I would like the opportunity to speak to this board before the three RACs decide on these concepts in reference to these points. The RAC thanks the BLM for the opportunity to make public comment before the finalizing of these comments.

Northeastern Great Basin RAC – Patsy Tomera (See attachment 3.)

The RAC had a public meeting and it was poorly attended. The main thing we want to accomplish is the performance outcome. We figured there was a way to make money if the permittee improved rangeland. We didn't like the reserve common allotment concept. We felt that it wasn't right to put another permittee on an allotment if you were trying to improve it. We didn't want strange cattle running next to ours because of disease. Conservation easements were not discussed because they're not really popular in Elko County.

Mojave-Southern Great Basin RAC – Jerry Helton, Chair (See attachment 4.)

We held a public meeting of the RAC and discussed these concepts. There was no attendance or input from the public during the meeting. We felt we needed to be focused on a bigger picture of healthy landscapes. We feel that BLM needs to refocus their financial resources toward better and continued monitoring. Another important component is performance-based management.

Whatever plan is adopted, continued modern grazing on our public lands to produce food should be considered and incorporated into the overall evaluation. It needs to be adapted to whatever happens to the grazing industry in the future.

- Jensen asked the RAC members whether they wanted to go with a consolidated letter from all of the RACs or separate letters. Response needs to be to the BLM Headquarters by November 10.
- Falen said he thought it would be perfectly acceptable for each RAC to make its own recommendation. They'll all a little bit different. He said he does think we're putting one layer of bureaucracy on top of another one. He said he thinks we can do all of this on our own.
- Nappe commented one of the things the RACs should consider is what the next steps are so that we remain involved.
- Swanson commented he thinks some of the relevance of dealing with conservation easements is that conservation easements allow ranching to remain where ranching is today and allow those rivers to remain where they belong.
- Jensen commented that there is wide spread acknowledgement among the federal agencies in Nevada that conservation easements are a management tool that can be useful.
- Nappe moved that the three RACs will vote on their own letters. The letters will be forwarded to Bob Abbey over the next few weeks and sent to Washington under a cover letter from Meg Jensen. Second - Maichle. Approved by a majority of the RAC members present.
- Eidel asked if Abbey will share the cover letter with the RACs before sending it to Washington. Abbey answered we are pressed for time, but would be transmitting in our memo the individual comments of the three RACs. We will not try to mislead anyone in Washington as to your feelings about the proposal.
- Dicks commented he thought the BLM was asking for advice from the advisory groups on a question from Washington. You should send a letter that is your decision. Abbey answered that the transmittal memo will be simple and will just say we have met, we have talked to our advisory groups, and these are their comments. We have already let Washington know what our opinions are of the proposal.

Abbey thanked everyone for a very good discussion.

RAC members met as Pods to identify issues for RAC 2004 involvement and to have lunch. The meeting reconvened at 1:40 p.m.

Pod Reports

Pod 3 – Public at Large, Elected Officials, Academia, State Agency, Native Americans

- Issues for RAC 2004 Involvement
 - Discuss ways to implement OHV guidelines developed in 2003.
 - What is going on with monitoring?
 - Discuss invasive plants/noxious weed issues, RAC provide guidance via Vegetation Guidelines.
 - Discuss invasive insect issues, RAC provide guidance
 - RAC and BLM clarify conservation easements and policy – apply individually
 - Continue discussion on fire management, RAC provide guidance
 - RACs to stay involved with SNPLMA decisions
 - RACs to review the NEPA and permitting process and provide suggestions on streamlining and simplification
- BLM Report Card
 - OHV guidelines developed in 2003, implement in 2004
 - Promise in 2003 to fund Wild Horse and Burro Program, has BLM followed through?
- One RAC member asked what the record is on acquisition? Morse answered he didn't know what the percentages are, but acquiring agencies are still working on lists 1 and 2. Abbey answered one year to eighteen months is probably the time frame. Singlaub commented we only pay for one appraisal from SNPLMA funds, make an offer and that's it. Some of the properties were taken off the list fairly quickly because sellers didn't want to sell at appraised prices.

Pod 2 – Environmental, Recreation, Archaeology, Wild Horses and Burros

- BLM Report Card
 - Commitment from Bob Abbey to have more consistency in the Districts in relation to Section 106
 - Standards and Guidelines for OHVs is an accomplishment from last year
- Issues for RAC 2004 Involvement
 - More discussion and implementation of OHV education
 - Implementation of Standards and Guidelines in the land use plans
 - Setting of AMLs for all HMAs - priority for 2004
 - Form a subgroup for Wild Horses and Burros
 - Additional funding help, can the RACs help, for Wild Horses and Burros
 - Consistency among the field offices for Section 106. Needs to be applied consistently across the state
 - Better orientation for new RAC members
 - How should RACs be involved in land use plan amendments
 - Better communication among the RACs
 - More training and info on the land use planning process

- Land disposal selection process, how to get info timely
- Questions about selection process for land disposal, how does the average person get involved
- Monitoring for land use health

Pod 1 – Mining, Rights-of-Way, Grazing Permittees, Recreation

- Mining
 - Adaptive management to revise permits to shorten the processing time
 - **Simplify the NEPA process. Take more information in on the initial , hard processing time schedules - 12 months, administrative flexibility in the permitting process???**
 - Urge BLM to increase staffing or use outsourcing to accomplish permit processing quicker
- Grazing
 - NEPA - Processing time limits, administrative flexibility
 - Interested parties should be re-consulted when administrative revisions are made, not everyone involved in the first consultation
 - Grazing permits suspended - use better process than Temporary Non-renewable
 - When there is suspended nonuse on the permit, the use should remain with the permit and not be dropped off
 - Adequate staffing or outsourcing to accomplish NEPA processing time limits
 - Make sure OHV guidelines are implemented

Comments

- Hankins commented that she likes the concept of a broader concept for processing mining permits. Things take longer than they should often because something occurs and the company wants to change the plan of operation proposal and the NEPA document needs to be revised. Need proposals that are not so much of a moving target. There is an issue with comments to third-party contractors who do not do what they are asked to do, and then the document comes back without the revisions and has to go back again. Need to cut down on administrative reviews by talking more to the third parties at the beginning.
- Smith commented NEPA needs to be streamlined to make it better and make it shorter, but we need to keep in mind that the document needs to be legally defensible.
- Kolkman commented we blame a lot of things on NEPA that are other things. One man's red tape is another man's constitutional rights. I wish we were focusing on performance in the livestock industry. We are reviewing all of our processes. Part of the problem with permit administration is the political climate we work in. We need to have a better working environment for our range cons. Until we get an agreement to care about the land no matter what, we're going to get bogged down in these processes.
- Morse commented that he shares the same opinions as the other managers. We have to do the process that is right to protect the land. We do have an automated process in Las Vegas. We use a lot of third-party contractors. We have to make them understand that they are working for BLM and they have to do what gets us through the process.

- Reed commented that maybe he seconds most of what's been said. Our greatest challenge is to incorporate a broader document, focus on the outcomes, look at a wider range of alternatives, and focus on adaptive management. The same can be said of our grazing documents. Things like moving a stock tank should be addressed in the original document and not require an additional document.
- Singlaub commented that he shares the same frustrations heard from the Pods today. There are organizations whose sole purpose in life is to challenge the federal government. Another frustration is getting Federal Register notices published in a timely manner. He said he likes the idea of outsourcing. Looking at the full range of options in a NEPA document allows us to do adaptive management. I'm not sure what the inconsistencies are on the 106 consultation.
- Ataman commented almost every aspect of the 106 consultation is different from individual to individual within each field office, not just between field offices.
- Beck commented that the differences in cultural resource work are a common problem discussed among archaeologists. It's even more complex if you are looking at something that crosses district lines.

Abbey told the group that there certainly is a fix for this.

- Jensen commented when we hire technical people, we hire people who are good at the technical aspects, and not necessarily writing. Maybe we need some training on how to write these documents to establish more consistency.

Vaught commented the Forest Service has some of the same NEPA problems that the BLM does. We have changed some of the process on a national level. Locally we have tried to build our expertise on NEPA. We are trying to be more sensitive to time lines. There are a number of incremental things, but there needs to be a continued agency emphasis on those things to make the changes.

- Mudge (asked by Abbey to respond) - What I've seen is that EISs get more detailed and more complicated over the years. The agency wants more and more detail on the plan that narrows the plan. The EISs are becoming encyclopedias. My plea would be to simplify and expect unpredictability.
- Hepworth (asked by Abbey to respond) - I think Terry Reed's efforts and the Winnemucca Field Office efforts have been more innovative. I have to give them kudos for that. Maybe we should let the technicians respond in a technical way and let the lawyers respond in a legal way. There needs to be some type of conflict resolution. That would help streamline the process. DOI has mandated looking at NEPA. I would ask that BLM solicit information from third party agencies.
- Roullier (asked by Abbey to respond) - I would like something similar across the board.

- Eidel commented there is something very discouraging in this discussion to him. He worked for the mining industry and doesn't hear anything different from what he heard 20 years ago. Maybe we need a task force to look at the problems.
- Maichle commented NEPA is about putting forth a document and getting response from all parties. We as the public find it just as frustrating as people from the industry do. There is such a wide diversity in agencies in how NEPA documents are prepared. He said he would love to see the BLM come up with a better process. Instead of trying to hit a bull's eye, widen the document.
- Reed suggested that we get the interested parties in a room for a day or two and the administrative record would consist of a tape or two and the document would consist of two or so pages.

Abbey told the group that it is important for those in the agency to hear about this issue. He said there are certain things BLM can do to address some of the inconsistencies that are in place. I would hope that we could issue a statewide policy on Section 106 consultation.

Abbey gave the group **Feedback on RAC 2003 BLM Report Card Items**.

- We need to try to provide the stakeholders and the customers we serve the same process in all the offices. Three examples of some of the efforts we have taken to take care of some of the details:
 - We have tried to invite interest groups to participate in our SLT meetings. We had a panel from the livestock industry at our last SLT.
 - We have held a workshop with the mining industry this last year.
 - We have met with leaders of the Native American communities.

Over the course of the next year we are going to meet with members of the environmental community and OHV officials. The reason for these dialogues is to provide quality time to listen. We need to pay close attention to addressing the long-standing issue of NEPA. We'll continue to work on that.

- Water development – The legislation that we expected and what we got were two different things. Federal land agencies cannot hold water rights on public lands. We are talking to the state water engineer, and once we have some clarification from the state engineer BLM will issue policy. (See attachment 5.)
- The RACs did a superb job last year in drafting OHV guidelines. We have final OHV guidelines that will be incorporated into our land use plans. (See attachment 6.)
- RACs expect BLM to establish appropriate management levels of wild horses and burros by 2005. Right now we operating under the assumption that we will get funds to achieve AML and we are working on establishing them.
- One of the deficiencies we still have is monitoring. We are revisiting our State Rangeland Monitoring Handbook. I am a big proponent of adaptive management but we have to be careful that before we include adaptive management into any document we include monitoring. You need to hold us accountable to do monitoring.
- We have made some progress in noxious weeds. We're starting to see some progress in elimination.
- The BLM Nevada needs to take a more active stance on the dumping of trash on public lands. Significant progress is being made.

- National Fire Plan – We're starting to see some results from the efforts that have been going on the past few years. We have more plans in place.
- DOI has issued NEPA. The RACs are welcome to make comments on the guidance.

One of the primary purposes of the RACs is to try to work toward solutions. We need to focus our attentions on things that are within our control. I continue to be impressed by the quality of the members who have been appointed to the RACs. I am disappointed that some of our members are not being reappointed but the new people we get are of the same good quality. Let's not let our philosophical differences get between us.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

Dan Peterson – Friends of Sand Mountain/California Off-Road Vehicle Association (CORVA). Peterson told the group that he was there to congratulate the RAC for their diligence in dealing with the off-road community. It takes a lot of people to work through things to find the solutions that are necessary for the land to be used for what it can be used, whatever that may be. My viewpoint as an OHV person is that there is a place for all people to recreate whatever that recreation might be. Use the land and tread lightly on it whatever you do. In general we're all stewards of the land. He commended the BLM, the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If we all work together we can solve these problems we have. There is a compromise out there.

- Eidel commented he would like everyone to know that the Sierra Front-Northwestern RAC met with Dan and discussed Sand Mountain. I was really impressed at the time with the Friends of Sand Mountain. They talked about education and working with the OHV'ers in the area. He said he was asked to look at Friends of Sand Mountain web page and what he found there was criticism of BLM and of the process.

Peterson answered that Friends of Sand Mountain and his boss told him not to mention that he's from California. But he's worked with a lot of the different communities that are in California. He told the group he was trying to guide them, and to relay the problems that they have had in California so that the same mistakes won't be made in Nevada. He said that most of the users of Sand Mountain do come from northern California. The past president of Friends of Sand Mountain, Jon Crowley, has a passion in seeing that Sand Mountain remains open as a place to ride and he gets kind of stubborn. We're (CORVA) is working with him and working with BLM to try to work the solutions through. We are working with some of the biological studies at Sand Mountain to try to understand what is happening there. Friends of Sand Mountain have developed, and he believes BLM uses, the flyer that is used there. Friends of Sand Mountain do clean-ups twice a year and a lot of educational things to make the area a safe place to ride.

After a short break, John Singlaub, Carson City field manager, announced that the Mustang Ranch had just sold for \$145,000. The ranch and its trademark name were on for sale on ebay.

Abbey introduced Kai Anderson, deputy chief of staff for United States Senator Harry Reid, saying he has never worked with a Congressional staff member who has been such an asset. Abbey thanked Anderson for his work for BLM and the Forest Service and for coming to the meeting. Other invited Congressional staff members had prior commitments.

- Anderson told the group that lands in Nevada are exceptional resources. Members of the RACs understand why working with the public lands in Nevada is the most enjoyable part of his job. One of the reasons is that Senator Ensign and Senator Reids' delegations work very well together even though the senators have different political philosophies.
- Senator Reid sits on the Senate Interior Appropriations Committee which funds the Forest Service as well as the BLM and the other DOI agencies. Congress has passed many acts with little appropriations making it hard for federal agencies to implement them. The Nevada Congressional delegation members are looking to correct the small amount of money allocated to Nevada for wild horses and burros.
- The amendment to Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act appropriates some of the money to Lake Tahoe. This bill is expected to be passed as soon as the appropriations bill is passed which should be in early November.
- The Clark County Conservation Act of 2002 that passed in the last Congress is a good example of a very open public process in which all stakeholders were treated equally and factored into the final legislation. WSAs in other counties are being worked on, but all the WSA areas in the state can't be resolved in one fell swoop. We'd like to eventually resolve these issues around the state.
- The Mining Town Site Act that will apply to Nye and Esmeralda counties, sponsored by Congressman Gibbons. Residents will transfer ownership of some BLM land that they have been paying taxes on for a long time.
- The Direct Sale Bill with regards to mining land in a northern Nevada county was also introduced by Congressman Gibbons. It would basically sell a certain amount of acreage to Placer Dome. The reversal of the Mill Site Decision last week is a component of that.

The delegation is always open to suggestions on how they may better represent Nevada.

Questions and Comments

- Falen thanked Anderson for coming and asked if the amendment to SNPLMA to use money for Lake Tahoe is the only amendment that is proposed at this time. Anderson answered yes, but there have been questions about other money streams. Senator Ensign did a great job in making that money available for Lake Tahoe. It was a good thing to do but not an easy thing to do.
- Eidel asked about the bill dealing with wildlife. Anderson answered the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Bill introduced in 2001 basically provides incentives for wildlife and habitat improvement efforts. It is a way to solve some of the resource conflicts to make some organizations eligible for federal grants to work on federal lands in Nevada, lands that in other states would be private lands. Wildlife and sportsmen groups are very interested in this bill. It will be reintroduced in the Senate.
- Nappe asked what he sees as far as the future for CARA (legislation that funds state agencies for biodiversity)? Anderson answered this is a funding issue and will continue to be a funding issue.
- Swanson commented some of the investments that could be put into federal lands could reap long-term dividends if we continue to fund them such as wildland fire. Anderson told him it

is hard to push through things with long-term dividends. It is very difficult to convince a Congress to do long term budgeting.

- Parker asked what precedent was set by the outcome of the outsourcing? Anderson answered the Administration could move forward without consulting Congress. In Senator Reid's opinion it is a concept that will cost a lot of money and fail in the end. I don't know what the outcome will be at the end of the day.
- Reed commented that looking statewide there have been several public lands bills dealing with designation but not with land tenure issues such as one in Pershing County that is of interest to the Winnemucca office. Is the feeling in the delegation that these bills should resolve the WSA issue? Anderson answered that the delegation would rather look to the Clark County Bill as a way to move forward. The Black Rock Act was not the way to move forward to solve the WSA issue. It demonstrated that if you don't work with all the stakeholders in the beginning you have to go back and work with them again. If we could move forward county by county everyone would be happier in the end. Around the state the mix will be different in different places. These are complicated bills to put together so we can't deal with a lot of counties at one time.
- Swanson asked if there is anything that the RACs can do to help you push, do a little now instead of doing a lot later because it extends to more than one senator or congressman. Anderson answered that it is a good question but he has to think about it for a while.

Abbey thanked Anderson for his time.

There being no further business, State Director Abbey adjourned meeting at 4:25 p.m.

Friday, October 17

The three RACs met individually on Friday morning to elect officers and establish agendas and meeting dates for the next 12 months (see attached minutes from each RAC meeting).

At 11:30 a.m. the State Director reconvened the **three RACs in a joint session**. He asked each RAC to **report on their accomplishments for FY 2003 and their proposed agendas for FY 2004**.

Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin – Tina Nappe, Vice Chair

FY 2003 Accomplishments

- Met five times
- Voted on OHV guidelines
- Met in Fallon in July and had panel on tourism, reviewed Commission on Tourism's publication on visiting Nevada and suggested more information on Leave No Trace
- Visited Sand Mountain where there is a potential for the listing of the Sand Mountain Blue butterfly, but did not address the bottom line of the viability of listing the Blue butterfly
- Tour from Winnemucca office looking at the different range issues and the Mormon cricket issues
- Presentations on other issues also

2004 Agenda - Bill Roullier, Chair

- Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act - Round V
- Wild Horses and Burros, Standards and Guidelines
- Pine Nut and Winnemucca and Churchill County management plans
- Biomass utilization
- Truckee/Carson/Walker River updates – take a field trip to Truckee River area
- Briefings on Echo Canyon cement plant
- Wildfire Support Group and rehab issues
- Geothermal/wind projects update
- North Valleys Water Project DEIS review/comment (if available by July meeting)

Meeting Schedule 2004

- January 22 - 23 in Reno
- April 22 - 23 in Winnemucca
- July 29 - 30 in Carson City or Minden

At their individual meeting the RAC established a Wild Horse and Burro subcommittee including Sherm Swanson, Jim Eidel, and Susie Askew, chair. The RAC hoped to get the other RACs involved in this.

Bill Roullier was elected chair and Tina Nappe vice chair for 2004.

Mojave-Southern Great Basin – Jerry Helton, Chair

FY 2003 Accomplishments

- Wind energy issues
- Wild Horses and Burros - Setting AML
- Clark County Conservation Act of 2002
- Landscape restoration initiatives with the Ely district

Meeting Schedule 2004

- December 4 - 5 and March 25 - 26 in Las Vegas
- June 9 - 11 in Ely
- August 19 - 20 in Tonopah

2004 Agenda

- Implementation of OHV Guidelines
- Clark County Conservation Act of 2002
- WSA designations being removed
- Wild Horse and Burro issues
- Red Rock issues
- Oliver Ranch Environmental Education
- Impacts of multi-use criteria and recommendations of land use to BLM and their impacts on rural counties
- Duckwater expansion
- Elk plans
- Sage grouse plans
- Yomba USFS permits – vacant permits above Yomba – possible reactivating of livestock use
- Mining expansion
- Historic preservation of mines
- USFS – land management plans, trail designation, natural fire prescription concepts, criteria for outfitter guides and concessions

The 2003 slate of officers was reelected: Jerry Helton, Chair and Steve Mellington, Vice-Chair.

Northeastern Great Basin – Hank Vogler, Vice-chair

FY 2003 Accomplishments

- Approved Guidelines for OHV
- Sponsored Elko County Weed Summit
- Supported Trespass on BLM leased lands
- Supported Great Basin Restoration Initiative
- **Fish??**

Meeting Schedule 2004

- December 11 in Battle Mountain
- February 12 in Eureka
- April 15 in Ely
- June 10 – 11 in Elko

2004 Agenda

- Ely RMP
- Sage grouse Technical Review Team
- Vegetation guidelines
- Great Basin Restoration Initiatives
- Alternate energy sources
- Monitoring
- Watershed management project
- California National Historic Trail Center
- Implementation of OHV Guidelines
- Central Nevada Elk Plan, Jarbridge road issue, tourism interagency project
- Mining

Patsy Tamera was elected chair for 2004; Hank Vogler, vice-chair.

- Hankins commented that the draft Vegetation Guidelines should be available soon.

Wrap Up

The State Director thanked all of the members for dedicating two days to the meeting and announced that next year's Tri-RAC meeting will be in October. Elko will be looked at as the location.

- Nappe expressed her appreciation for all the work that Abbey and the staff does on behalf of Nevada and the BLM and the good work with the RAC.

It was moved and seconded to establish a Wild Horse and Burro subcommittee to be made up of representatives of the three RACs. The motion passed by majority vote.

- Sierra Front representatives - Susie Askew, Sherm Swanson and Jim Eidel with John Falen as alternate
- Mojave-Southern representatives - Billie Young, Clair Toomey and Bob Maichle
- Northeastern will have names by the end of October
- Abbey asked Susie Askew to serve as temporary chair. He will look at inviting other agency representatives.
- The subcommittee will address establishing AMLs, look at HMAs where AML is below 10 and whether these should be zeroed out, how the RAC can support the Bureau in moving forward with the BLM strategy and in funding, and look at horse/sage grouse interaction.
- Hankins commented that the Northeastern RAC does have approved Wild Horse and Burro Guidelines. (See attachment 7.)

Maichle commented that the Pods had shared a tremendous amount of information and wished they had had more time to talk together.

There being no further business, State Director Abbey adjourned the meeting 12:05 p.m.

Date Approved:
December 15, 2003

Approved by:
/s/ Robert V. Abbey
State Director, Nevada

Minutes provided by Nancy Thompson, BLM Winnemucca Field Office.

Attachments:

1. BLM Program Outlook for FY 2004 PowerPoint Presentation (19 pp)
2. Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council draft letter to Bob Abbey, Nevada State Director, Recommendations for Sustaining Working Landscapes, September 29, 2003 (2 pp)
3. Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council Recommendations for Sustaining Working Landscapes, September 12, 2003 (2 pp)
4. Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council Consensus-based Responses to Sustaining Working Landscapes, September 5, 2003 (2 pp)
5. Draft Instruction Memorandum – BLM Nevada Water Right Policy (5 pp)
6. Information Bulletin No. NV-2003-105, Nevada Off-Highway Vehicle Guidelines (5 pp)
7. Memorandum –Approval of Wild Horse and Burro Standards and Guidelines for the Northeast Great Basin Resource Advisory Council (13 pp)
8. Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council Proposed Standards and Guidelines for Wild Horses and Burros, May 1999 (12 pp)
9. Map – State of Nevada Wilderness Status, October 8, 2003
10. Minutes from individual RAC meetings
 - Northeastern Great Basin (pp)